



Figure 1 Logos for the Academic Resource Center and the Writing Center

## **PLAGIARISM**

### **LAVC's Policy on Academic Dishonesty:**

“Academic dishonesty is defined as *“Dishonesty, such as cheating, or knowingly furnishing false information to colleges”* (Student Code of Conduct §9803.12). The consequences for academic dishonesty can be determined by the instructor and/or with the assistance of the Vice President of Student Services. For repeat offenses, students will be subject to a system called progressive discipline, which affords students due process protocols.”

### **What is plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or ideas and attempting to pass them off as your own.

### **Why is plagiarism a big deal?**

Plagiarism is a serious offense that comes with serious consequences. Turning in work that is not completely your own is dishonest and can be considered cheating.

### **How do students get caught plagiarizing, and what are the consequences?**

There are computer programs that many schools use to scan assignments for plagiarized material. Teachers are also trained to recognize plagiarism and will often assign a failing grade for the assignment or even the entire course. Some students have even been suspended or expelled for plagiarizing.

### **What constitutes plagiarism?**

There are several types of plagiarism, including:

- Turning in work done by someone else
- Copying words straight from the source without: 1) using quotation marks *and* 2) giving credit to the author
- Crediting the author, but copying word-for-word without using quotation marks, which gives the impression that the author's words are your own
- Using your own words to communicate an author's meaning (a.k.a. paraphrasing) without crediting the author
- Summarizing an author's ideas without giving him/her credit

### **How can I tell what ideas need to be cited?**

You need to cite the source if the author's idea is not *common knowledge*.

### **How can I tell if an idea is common knowledge?**

*Common knowledge* includes information widely available or known in a given field, information that the average person would know, and information you find in several sources during your research. When in doubt, give a citation.



Figure 2 A jovial cartoon of academic items

### **How can I avoid plagiarism?**

There are two types of plagiarism: intentional and unintentional. Avoiding intentional plagiarism is simple, but avoiding unintentional plagiarism requires effort. Unintentional plagiarism can usually be traced to sloppy note taking or carelessness while writing the actual paper. To avoid these pitfalls, students can employ a system for taking notes during the research phase and pay special attention to integrating citations while writing their papers.

### **Ideas for careful note taking:**

- Any time you write down the exact words from a source in your notes, use quotation marks in your notes to remind yourself later that it is a direct quote.
- When summarizing an author's ideas, use a symbol to remind yourself that you have done so.
- When paraphrasing, put the source away and write the ideas out in your own words, then check back with the source to make sure you have paraphrased accurately. (Using the same sentence structure but replacing the author's words with synonyms is still plagiarism!)
- Any time you take notes from a source, make sure to write down the page number and name of the source for future reference. You will need this information when it comes time to write the paper and create the works cited page.

### Examples:

1. Enclosing the source's original wording in quotation marks

### Original source

Because global warming is projected to be greatest at high latitudes, Polar Regions would likely show the first signs of ecological damage. The Arctic and Antarctic oceans currently harbor the world's most productive fisheries. At the base of these fertile food chains are plankton – microscopic plants and animals that thrive beneath the ice covering these waters for much of the year. Declines in the extent of sea ice, however, could cause a plankton crash that would topple a huge biomass of fish and seabirds (Udall 424).

### Plagiarism

James Udall points out that because global warming is projected to be greatest at high latitudes, Polar Regions would probably be the most affected by it. He also observes that declines in the extent of sea ice could cause a plankton crash that would destroy a huge biomass of fish and seabirds (424).

In this example, the plagiarized portion is underlined. Can you see how the student copied directly from the original source without enclosing the borrowed wording in quotation marks? Even though there is a page number given and the author's name

is mentioned, we are still left with the impression that the wording belongs to the student.

### **Correct**

James Udall points out that “Because global warming is projected to be greatest at high latitudes, polar regions would” probably be the most affected by it. He also observes that “declines in the extent of sea ice [...] could cause a plankton crash that would “destroy “a huge biomass of fish and seabirds” (424).

In this example, the student encloses all of the author’s original words in quotation marks. By doing so, he/she lets us know that it was James Udall, not the student, who wrote them.

### 2. Paraphrasing without copying the author’s structure too closely

### **Plagiarism**

Since global warming is thought to be most intense at upper latitudes, polar areas would probably be the first to show signs of environmental harm. Decreases in the level of oceanic ice might cause a large plankton decrease that would collapse a huge group of fish and oceanic birds (424).

In this example, all the student does is copy the author’s sentence structure and replace most of the words with synonyms.

### **Correct**

The areas surrounding the North and South poles will probably experience the consequences of global warming before other parts of Earth. If there were to be a rapid deterioration in the ice that covers the sea in these areas, the plankton that supports the sea creatures and birds in the area would die off, and the entire ecosystem could be disrupted (Udall 424).

In this example, the student read the passage and thought about the meaning, then put the source away and paraphrased in his/her own words. The best time to do this is during the note taking phase, so you will already have the ideas written in your own words when you get ready to write the paper.

One strategy for taking notes that will lessen the likelihood of plagiarism is to refrain from looking at the actual source while taking the notes. Instead, after reading the original source, close the book, think about the information, and then put those ideas into your own words.

As you take notes, be sure to include exact page references, since you will need the pages numbers later if you use the information in your paper.



Figure 3 Clip art of a clip board

### **Exercise:**

**Read the following example, and then decide if any part is plagiarized or inaccurate. If so, rewrite the example, correcting any problems.**

### **Original source**

In addition to wanting to break out of the mold of a secondary worker receiving inferior wages and benefits and having little authority or opportunity for advancement, women have been motivated to make real money and to acquire valued skills and some semblance of security because of their relatively recent realization that women, even women with children, may well be forced to care for themselves or, at the very least, to participate in providing for the family unit (Sidel 493).

1. Ruth Sidel claims that young working women worry not only about being treated as if they were inferior to men, but also about the fact that they may be left on their own to support a family without the benefit of the same salary as their male counterparts (493).
2. According to Ruth Sidel, women are now “motivated to make real money and to acquire valued skills” and a sense of security because they have recently discovered that they might be left to look out for themselves and provide for their family (493).

**This handout is based on the following texts:**

Fowler, H. Ramsey, Jane E. Aaron, and Jo Kester Tarvers. The Little, Brown Handbook. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. 545-51.

Hefferman, James A.W., and John E. Lincoln. Writing: A College Handbook. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. 535-8.

Sidel, Ruth. "The New American Dreamers." Gender Images. Ed. Melita Schaum and Connie Flanagan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992. 487-499.

**All of the above texts are available in The Writing Center.**